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BY REV. MARK HOPKINS, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF WILLIAMS COLLEGE.

BURDENS TO BE CAST UPON THE LORD.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."—PSALM lv, 23.

SCARCELY do we find in the Bible, stronger expressions of anxiety and distress, than in the Psalm from which the text is taken. "My heart," says the Psalmist, "is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me." This distress was caused by the hypocrisy and treachery of others; especially of those who were professors of religion, and who had a high standing in the church. "For it was not," says he, an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." Sometimes he speaks of the cause of his trouble as if there were several, as when he says, "they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me," and sometimes as if there were but one; but he was evidently surrounded by artful, malignant and hypocritical persons, who, while they professed great regard for his welfare, would not suffer him to pursue his duties quietly, or to be at peace. "He hath," says he, "put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." These persons were doubtless types of a class who have been in the church in every age. Sometimes they have remained concealed, then again they have been drawn out, and become conspicuous; but they have always been among the severest trials of the people of God, and the greatest hindrances to his cause.

Thus troubled, two sources of relief occurred to the Psalmist. His first impulse was to free himself from the annoyances occasioned by the wickedness of others and the responsibilities that were laid upon him, by fleeing away and remaining in solitude. "Oh," said he, "that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." We here see in him those germs of the monastic system which belong to our nature, and which, in after ages, were so fully and so disastrously developed. But better counsels prevailed. Instead of casting off his responsibilities and fleeing from his troubles, he was led to see that there was a God on high who was able to sustain him under the one, and to deliver him from the other, and to go to him in earnest and confiding prayer. "As for me," says he, "I will call upon God: and the Lord shall save me." Having thus found the true source of relief and strength, he invites others to share it with him in the words of the text—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

It will be observed that the former part of this passage is limited by the latter. The doctrine therefore which it contains, and which I propose to illustrate in its application, first to individuals, and then to this society, is, that the *righteous*, who cast their burden upon the Lord, shall be sustained.

These words, as far as they imply the existence of a burden of some kind, are applicable to the whole human race. There are none who do not find that in their condition, or character, or prospects, or duties, which gives them anxiety, and which may be regarded as a burden.

But the burdens which are borne by men are of two kinds. There are some, such as physical suffering, and oftentimes poverty, which are laid upon us by the providence of God, which we do not at all voluntarily assume, and to free ourselves from which it is right that we should make the most strenuous efforts. These come upon us as passive subjects of that course of events which is ordered by God, and when we cannot free ourselves from them, our duty is, not mere submission—but cheerful acquiescence, and a full exercise of those passive virtues which are among the most efficient means of moral discipline. We are bound to believe, we do believe, however unequally these burdens may be dis-

tributed, however mysterious it may seem that they should exist at all, that they are all apportioned and laid upon us by the hand of a father, and though we may say at the time, with Jacob, that all these things are against us, yet, if we have a filial spirit, we shall find in the end that God meant them for good. The basis of our submission is our confidence in him that his government is perfect, and while we know that "he does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men," it is ours to feel and to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

But there is another class of burdens which belong to us as active and responsible beings, which are not so much laid upon us, as laid *before* us, and which it is optional with us to assume or not. These are those great duties of piety towards God, and of reciprocity and benevolence towards men, the burden of which has been fully taken up, and perfectly sustained, but once in the history of our world. God is carrying forward his purposes, in the accomplishment of which we believe he is working out the highest good of his universe. In doing this he makes use of the voluntary agency of his intelligent and accountable creatures. He has made them capable of recognizing and appreciating those ends which he proposes, and of becoming intelligently coworkers with him. Here it is that we find the true dignity of man, and the highest point of union between him and God; for as man is great in intellect only as he comprehends the thoughts of God, and great in suffering only as he submits to the will of God, so is he great in action only as he labors to accomplish the purposes of God. But the present constitution of things is such, that in doing that part which God has assigned to us, which is truly ours, in the accomplishment of these purposes, self-denial and suffering are often involved.

So far as we can judge, if sin had never entered, no duty would have been regarded as a self-denial or a burden. Obedience to a perfect law would have been perfect liberty, and the result of this union of liberty and law would have been a happiness limited only by the capacity of its subject. But sin entering, necessarily became the cause of burden bearing, both to those who were under its power, and to those who were not. In itself, and to those who are under it, it is the greatest possible burden. There is no slavery like that of sin, and that too, whether its subjects do or do not struggle against it. So far as holy beings have intercourse with those that are sinful, as when the arch angel contended with the devil, it must be a grief and a burden; and then, if any are to be recovered from the power of sin, as it has in itself no recuperative energy, whatever is done for them must originate in an influence from without; and the great law of the universe for their recovery, seems to be that of vicarious suffering. Of this, we have the great example in our Lord Jesus Christ. He, and he only, "made his soul an

offering for sin." He alone "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." His sufferings only constitute an atonement, and lie at the foundation of human hope. Still, it was necessary that the Apostles, and those who came afterwards, should be "partakers of Christ's sufferings," and "should fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ." He laid the foundation, but the superstructure is to be carried up, and this can be done only by the same spirit of self-renunciation and of burden bearing which actuated him.

Enlightened benevolence is essentially and uncompromisingly opposed to all wickedness, and the more intense the benevolence, the stronger is this feeling. Let then a benevolence, so enlightened that it is opposed to nothing but sin, so free that it is willing to do all things but to commit sin, move forward to the accomplishment of its purposes in a world like this, and a point will be reached, even though every thing be done with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, where there will be conflict, where all the possible power and art of selfishness and malignity will be arrayed against it, and where, if it goes forward at all, it must be into the fires which the rage and malice of its enemies have kindled. Let it be now, that the cause of God requires it, and it will go into those fires. So was it with Christ. He excited no unnecessary opposition. There was nothing in his manner that justly gave offence, but by simply taking up the burden which his mission required, he came under a pressure of agony which rendered necessary every drop of the bloody sweat, he came to a point where he must wear the purple robe and the crown of thorns, and where he might not hide his face from shame and spitting. He came to a point where the cross was laid upon him so long as he could bear it, where the nails were driven, and where the accursed tree as it was raised up and fell with a shock to its position, caused every fibre in his frame to vibrate in agony. There, suspended between heaven and earth, lifted up that he might draw all men unto him, he hung for six long hours, enduring those agonies of expiring nature that could not have been greater, and that might not be less. The burden that was upon him bore him down to death; and at no point could he have withdrawn from it, so as to spare himself a single pang. So was it with the Apostles. They were willing to become all things to all men, so far as they might. But not so could the crest of the serpent be smoothed down, and his envenomed bite be prevented. It was necessary that they should hunger and thirst, and be naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and be reviled, and persecuted, and defamed, and made as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things; and finally that they should lay down their lives as the highest example they could furnish of the grandeur of faith, and as their strongest possible attestation to the value of those purposes of God which they were laboring to carry

ent. So was it with those ancient veterans in virtue mentioned by the Apostle in the 11th chapter of Hebrews; and so has it been with the martyrs and faithful servants and missionaries of Christ down to the present time. These have all recognized the great principle that burdens were to be assumed and borne if good was to be done, and in bearing them they have all been actuated by one spirit.

This principle we must recognize, this spirit we should consider well. It was not, properly speaking, an anti-spirit. It was a positive principle striving after a great and glorious object, and going forward to the attainment of that in a spirit of love, quietly but resolutely bearing every burden which the accomplishment of its purpose necessarily involved. It was not a vain or ostentatious spirit, for it sacrificed reputation among men; it was not an enthusiastic spirit, for the object in view justified the highest feeling and effort; it was not a fanatical spirit, for there was no malignity; it was not a superstitious spirit, for they followed Christ, and paid little regard to organizations and external forms; it was not a selfish and ambitious, or a self-willed and factious spirit, for they had no personal object to accomplish, or personal feeling to gratify. If they could but preach Christ and him crucified, and exalt him as a Saviour from sin, it was enough. It was by prayer and effort and suffering that the cause of Christ was borne forward, and souls converted in the early days of the church. Paul knew what it was to "travail in birth" for souls, to be in constant heaviness for them, to agonize for them in prayer, and wherever, since that time, souls have been converted, wherever there have been revivals of religion, there have been those who have known what these things mean. These have been few, and perhaps unknown, but they have been God's burden-bearers in the great work of building his spiritual temple, and it is because these have been so few that that work has gone so slowly up.

Our business then, as individuals, is to follow Christ and his Apostles both in the recognition of this principle, and in the spirit in which we bear those burdens which properly devolve upon us; and thus doing, we shall be sustained.

But while we ask, as individuals, the simple question, Lord what would'st thou have us to do? and would be ready to do and to suffer all that might be required by its true answer, we are to remember that we are liable to assume burdens that do not properly belong to us, and to bring upon ourselves troubles which we may properly, and which we ought to avoid. The words of the text are—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." At this point cases often arise which it is difficult to decide. No doubt it may happen, that a man, passing by, and observing men at strife, could interfere with advantage; and yet we are told that he that passeth by and meddeth with strife belonging not to

him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. It is a great thing to pass through life wisely, knowing our own duty, and doing it; and not interfering with those things which do not belong to us. The character of men may often be tested as much by what they let alone, as by what they do. It cannot be doubted that a large portion of the burdens which men take upon them, of the cares and anxieties which trouble them, are such as they have no right to have, and as are in no proper sense theirs. It is not the ambitious, the covetous, the fashionable and worldly, pressed down as they often are with their burdens, that are invited to cast those burdens upon the Lord. No; God will sustain no man, in the sense in which that term is here used, under such burdens as these. As I have already said, the last part of the text limits the first. It is the righteous only who are here invited to cast their burdens upon the Lord, and only as they are righteous, that they have any right to expect to be sustained.

But as there is nothing so difficult to reach and to maintain as the simple and unostentatious, and yet energetic benevolence of Christ and his first followers, there is a constant danger, even to the righteous, and those most directly engaged in his service, of turning into some by-path which seems to lead in the same direction, of putting that which is subordinate before that which is primary, of making false issues, and turning aside to vain jangling, and thus becoming involved in perplexities and cares which never could have come upon them if they had pursued the simple line of duty. O, how many of the cares connected with rites and ceremonies, and with the maintenance of sectarianism in its various forms, are of this character! How do these cares often dwarf the growth, and deform the proportions of religion itself! And can the burden of these be brought to God with the expectation that he will sustain us under them? No. They are to be repented of, and cast off altogether, and never resumed. The only duty we have respecting such cares and burdens is, not to have them at all. They are all sinful in themselves, and they are injurious as exhausting that energy which ought to be given to the support of those burdens which are truly ours. It is these burdens, and these only which we have a right to cast upon the Lord—not to free ourselves from responsibility—for the language is, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain"—What? The burden? No, but "*thee*." The promise is that God will sustain us under our burdens however heavy they may be, if they are the burdens of the righteous, that is, if they are such, not as we have wickedly and wantonly taken upon ourselves, but such as he has appointed for us, and as are assumed out of a regard to his cause.

But perhaps some one may ask at this point, how God can be said to sustain those who are overborne by wickedness, and who finally die in consequence of their burdens, and under their very

pressure. How little does such an one know of the range of the spirit, and the power of faith, and the preciousness of the promises, and the consolations of God! I would answer such an one as Christ would have answered one who should have asked him to reconcile what he said about his yoke as easy, and his burden as light, with what he said to the same disciples of their being hated of all men, and persecuted and killed for his name's sake. I answer in the words of one who reckoned that the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; who, while he looked at the things which are not seen, could count every affliction which was but for a moment, light, because it was working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; who could say of the christians in his day, "that though they were killed all the day long, and were counted as sheep for the slaughter, yet that in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that had loved them."

Thus we see precisely the position which every true servant of God must wish as an individual, to take. He must wish to have the spirit of Christ, to put himself under the great law of love, and then to do and to suffer just all that that law would require. He would wish to accomplish the greatest amount of good within his power, and whatever sacrifices or sufferings he might make or endure as necessary to this, he would say in unpretentious imitation of Him whose follower he is, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

And what is thus true of an individual christian, must also be true of a body of christians associated for the purpose of promoting any one of those objects which they believe it to be the purpose of God to accomplish. This is the position which this board of Missions, and every true friend of this blessed cause must wish to take. For a long time the church neglected to take up this burden. Awakened by the call of Mills and his associates, our predecessors were aroused to a sense of their responsibility. They put their shoulders under this burden. We think they were called upon by God to do it. We do not think that any one of them, no, not even the most devoted missionary has followed too closely in the footsteps of the Saviour, or borne a burden that was too heavy. If Mills, or Hall, or Evarts could speak to us to-night, we do not think that one of them would regret that he had labored or suffered so much. But they have gone, and have transferred the burden to us, and now, as we are true to our trust, our wish is to do and to suffer just all that God would have us do and suffer, that the gospel of his son may become "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and a salvation to the ends of the earth."

The question then arises, what the precise burden is which God would lay upon us as a Missionary Society.

The importance of this question, and the reason why it presses upon us particularly at this stage of our operations, may be seen if we compare the present moment with that which took place in the early period of christianity.

When this movement commenced, it evidently had something of the spirit which actuated the disciples of primitive times. The burden which was felt arose, not chiefly from a view of the temporal misery and degradation of the heathen, but from their wickedness, and their consequent exposure to eternal death. It was the interests of the soul in its relations to death and judgment and eternity that burdened the spirit, and gave energy to effort, and weight to appeals, and which led men to feel that they must, at all hazards, preach "Jesus and salvation" to dying men. It was felt that there was a moral pestilence raging in those regions, which was going on unchecked to its awful issues, and the cry of its victims was ringing in their ears that they should bear to them the balm of Gilead, and make known the physician that is there. So was it with the primitive christians. The love of Christ constrained them. Their desire and prayer to God for men was that they might be saved. They were willing—thus illustrating the true and only harmony between a stern regard to principle and a wise regard to expediency—to become all things to all men, that they might *save* some. It was because the Gospel of Christ was the power of God unto *salvation*, that they were not ashamed of it. They felt that they were sent unto the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ." It was true indeed that their doctrine would revolutionize and radically transform society; but as they looked with the eye of faith upon the interests of eternity, the relations and interests of time dwindled into insignificance, and with fearlessness, with simplicity, and with great power, gave they witness to the central and incontrovertible fact of the resurrection of Christ, and to the freeness and preciousness of the salvation that is in Him, and left the event with God. Pursuing this course, christianity was aggressive, and triumphant; and continued to be so till the simplicity and grandeur of their object was lost in those questions which gave rise to sects, and which spring out of the relations of Christianity to the interests of man in the present life. Then the deep waters which had begun to flow, instead of rolling on to fertilize the whole earth, were drained off into the marshes of controversy, and became stagnant; and a region which ought to have been like the garden of God, became the fitting haunt of those apocalyptic frogs which came out of the mouth of the dragon, and of the beast, and of the false prophet. And what thus took place in that wider and mightier movement, it is to be feared may recur in this

of our day. As this cause makes progress, it is found to bear upon literature, and science, and civilization, and commerce; and to become complicated, as few would suppose, with questions of church government, and of politics, and of social organization; and there is danger that a desire to promote civilization, and literature, and science, and to remove directly, specific forms of evil, moral social and political, will take the place of the simple desire to preach Christ and him crucified, and to save men.

The question then recurs. What are the burdens which God would lay upon us?

I have already remarked that when we, as christians, undertake to promote an end, we do it because we suppose God intends to accomplish that end, and thus become co-workers with him. The responsibility and burden therefore which we assume must be determined by that purpose of God which we propose to accomplish—that particular result and triumph of his truth which we hope to accelerate, or to augment. But if, guided by revelation, we transport ourselves forward, and take a position where we can look back on the great drama of time as completed, we shall see that the grand results which God has been working out are two; one of which, however, was subservient to the other. The first of these is to have its theatre on this earth, and will involve the full and perfect triumph of christianity over every thing that opposes itself to it. The stone that was cut out without hands, must become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Sooner or later, in one way or another, the time must come when the evils which now provoke the vengeance of heaven, and curse humanity, shall come to an end; when wars, and intemperance, and licentiousness, and fraud, and slavery, and all oppression shall cease; when men shall show a true love to themselves by obedience to all the natural laws of God, and a true love to each other and to God by an obedience to all his moral laws; when all the energies of society, instead of being wasted in indolence, or dissipated and palsied by vice, or misdirected by ambition, shall be called out under the direction of a science that can avail itself of the agencies of nature in a way that we now know nothing of, and shall be employed in beautifying the earth, and in adding to the comforts of man; when family jars, and sectarian zeal, and party spirit shall cease, and, through the transforming influence of christianity, there shall be a condition of society as perfect as we can conceive of in the present state; when the kingdom of God shall be set up, and his will shall be done on the earth. It is from partial glimpses of this state, and an attempt to remove particular evils which are supposed to be the chief obstacle in the way of its advent, without any perception of the deep-seated and radical difficulty in the very

nature of man, which nothing but the religion of Christ can remove—the plague spot that his blood alone can cleanse—that there are so many reformers of the world, crying, Lo here! and Lo there! whom we are not to go after nor to follow.

But if it is specifically for *this* state that we are to labor, then we can make no difference between what is, and what is not, missionary ground. There is no city, or village, or family, on the face of the earth where this state is commenced; and when we look at nominal christendom and see how utterly alien from the spirit of Christ are its general maxims and its current of feeling, how its energies and resources flow in channels that were never marked out by the finger of God, and that the little portion of those energies and resources that is devoted to Him and his service is but as the light mist which ascends from the surface of the river, to the great body of its waters; when we see its religious divisions and animosities, and these too growing more broad and inveterate, and its deep-seated moral corruptions; when we see how much there is of faithful preaching of the gospel, and how general and systematic is its rejection; we feel that there is on every side of us a call for christian labor, and that unless there shall be brought about another proportion altogether of the aggressive and the resisting forces, the new order of things can never come. To labor for the accomplishment of this object in his family and neighborhood, is the business of every individual christian, it is the business of every church to labor for it in its vicinity; and in doing this there is no vice or form of evil which they must not approach and attempt to remove; not a weed great or small is to be left standing in the garden of God. But this is not missionary labor; it is but as the farming and gardening of our thickly settled states, while the axe of the missionary startles the ear of silence in the unbroken forest.

But there is another result which God has in view, to which this of which I have now spoken is but as the widening of the river at its mouth, to the ocean into which it flows. This is that which lies beyond the general judgment. This, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it." Every thing relating to this is vast beyond our thought. Those simple words, "Eternal life;" those words of our Saviour, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;" the capacities of the soul, and the endless duration upon which it enters; the joy of angels on the conversion of one sinner; the coming, and sufferings, and death of the Son of God, all show that this result, even in the case of a single soul, far transcends our conceptions. It is salvation! "Salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory"—Salvation through the blood of the Lamb! And then, when we look at the numbers without number of the redeemed, every one of them

circling nearer and nearer the eternal throne till he is lost in a brightness which our present vision cannot penetrate, and at the wonderful revelation of the glory of God, of his mingled justice and mercy, which is made, and shall be for ever, in every one of these, we see a result worthy of this strange scene of six thousand years, of its central figure, the cross of Christ, and of its closing scenes, the final conflagration, and the general judgment.

Now every soul that becomes a partaker of this salvation, though he may have contributed nothing to the perfection of society on earth, though, like the dying thief, it may have been in the hour of his last agony that he turned an eye of faith upon a crucified Redeemer, will yet swell the glory of that result.

It was this salvation, that he, whom, without irreverence, we may call the first great missionary, came from heaven to provide, and to publish; it is the fact that there is such a salvation, that lies at the root of missions, and supplies the circulating sap of all their vitality. This salvation it is our business, as a missionary society, to make known to the ends of the earth, to preach it to every creature, to proclaim it in every place till the message shall find such a lodgment as to give us assurance that it will continue to be proclaimed there, and then, having, like the great Apostle, no more place in those parts, to pass on to places where Christ has not been named. Certainly there ought to be an agency for proclaiming these glad tidings every where, simply as tidings, to all classes of men, however wicked and debased, and giving them an opportunity to embrace this salvation, without waiting to perfect society, or to adjust the nicer questions of theological controversy. Certainly, for the sake of the church itself, there should be enterprises like this, in which christians, who may still differ in many things, may unite, as brethren, their prayers and efforts, and which may be as cope stones along the arch of the spiritual temple, where the tracery that springs from different points and adorns its sides, may intertwine its branches, and give unity and symmetry to the whole. This gives us the distinction between missionary labor and all other; this gives us our principle, however difficult, in particular cases, its application may be.

Our object thus being the salvation of men, the burden which rests upon us, is not simply a proclamation of the gospel among the heathen, but *such a proclamation of it as shall save the soul*. If we fail of this, we fail of our object altogether. I do not say that we do no good, but we fail of the object we have in view, of that which is the very soul of our enterprise. We are not a society for promoting civilization, or literature, or the arts, but for saving men; and the great reason why this is not more fully accomplished, is because our missionaries and our Board, and the christian public who act with us are not more ready to take up just the burden that is necessary to accomplish this. This is not

the giving of money. Money cannot convert a soul. Any amount of this may be given, and nothing be effected, except that a certain sum has changed hands. Money! why the heathen give far more money for the support of the pomps and follies of their religions than we do for the spread of ours. It is not the establishment of seminaries, or of printing presses, or of any external apparatus. No, but it is that constraining love of Christ, and that sense of the infinite value of salvation, which leads the missionary to *preach the word*, in season, and out of season, to testify publicly and from house to house of the grace of God; which would lead our missionary Boards and the christian public to sympathize with their missionaries in these feelings, and to sustain them constantly in the arms of faith and of prayer; which would fill the monthly concerts all over the land, and cause those who were there to wrestle with God as did Jacob, and to say to him, "we will not let thee go except thou bless us." It is one thing to give money, and print reports, and go across the ocean and establish a station, and print books, and tell them something of the christian religion, and how it differs from theirs; and quite another to go to them as Brainard did to his poor Indians, as those who are under the wrath of God, who must accept of his mercy in Christ or perish; and by the very agony of prayer, and the earnestness of preaching connected with it, to be the means of such outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and of such manifest and surprising conversions to God. Those Indians have probably had no agency in perfecting society upon earth, their very tribes have perished, but they now shine as stars in the crown of their Redeemer; and those conversions were worth more than all the results of great meetings, and speeches, and munificent donations from which the spirit of prayer and of God are absent, and which are not connected with the salvation of the soul—there was connected with them more true missionary labor.

That we have failed, and that this has been our great failure, of taking up this burden as we ought, there can be no doubt. Whether wrong principles have in any case been adopted in pursuing things incidental too much, I cannot say, but they certainly have been pursued too exclusively. There has been a withdrawing of the spirit from those higher regions of spiritual sympathy, and struggle, and communion with Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings; and all the channels of that sympathy have been left empty and dry; and so while there has been external activity, and some good has been done, there has yet, around many of the missionary stations, not been the greenness and verdure which we hoped to see. So has it been; so is it now. And unless this Board and its friends come together with the confession of their sin in this, and with a readiness to assume this burden more fully for the future, and to cast themselves upon the Lord that they

may be sustained in bearing it, then that which is really the cause of missions will go backwards, and we shall have perplexities and burdens come upon us as judgments, and under which God will not sustain us.

But, it may be asked, are we to neglect literature and science, education, and forms of government, and civilization? Are not these valuable in themselves, and are they not important aids in promoting christianity? Are we to narrow our views to a single object, and not rather take those that are comprehensive and enlarged?

The general question here involved there is not now time fully to discuss. From the first there have been two theories of missions, according to one of which we are to introduce christianity at once, as a means of salvation, and to leave other things to follow in its train; and according to the other, we are to introduce other things as the means of introducing christianity. I do not mean that missions have been established distinctly and avowedly on these two principles, but that in the minds and in the labors of some, the spirit of the first method, which may be called the method of faith, and that in the minds and the labors of others, the spirit of the second method, which may be called the method of philosophy, has predominated. Now we believe in the method of faith. We believe that the greater will include the less—that as a general thing under God's government, and more especially where, as in a tree or an animal, or a human being, or in the social state, our object is to be reached by a process of development, the attainment of the highest end must ultimately involve that of all others. We believe that the religious nature of man is that which is deepest and most radical in him, and that it is only as that is quickened, that motives of sufficient power to induce him to break away from the vices and degradations which are opposed to a high civilization as well as to a true religion, can be brought to bear upon him. We believe, that except as this nature is quickened and directed and strengthened by christianity, any form of civilization that may exist will fall in by its own weight; that literature will become corrupted and a curse; that social life will be full of jarring elements; and that inventions in the arts, and those improvements which facilitate the intercourse of men, and every thing which gives an accelerated movement to society will be but as the laying down of the iron track, and the concentration of energy in the iron horse, that shall prepare the way for the shocks of more awful and destructive collisions. We do not find, and the fact is to be noted, that Christ or his Apostles made any inventions or discoveries in the arts and sciences, or sought directly to promote literature. We believe that the preaching of "Christ and him crucified," and that only, is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation;" and that if we can so plant

and water the tree of life that we shall have the fruit that is unto life eternal, we shall have also the green leaves, and the fragrance, and the broad shade of a right social state; and we think but lightly of that kind of enlargement and liberality of view which would lead any one to leave his appropriate work at the root of this tree; and to be looking all over the branches, and spending his minute and fruitless labors around its individual fruit stalks, and the peduncles of its leaves. The principle here indicated we hold to be essential in the first planting of christianity, and even after it is established, it may be doubted whether it will not be found that those who attempt to carry society forward on any other principle, will not labor in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity."

We see then, distinctly, what our object is; and what the great burden is which we must assume if we would accomplish it. It is one which the world knows nothing of; which none but those who sympathize with Christ in that spirit which brought him to this world can know. But as we move on under this, we find, at different points, individual burdens which often press upon us with great weight. Such have, at times, been the want of suitable men as missionaries; the removal by death of able and distinguished helpers; the interference of popery; persecutions among the heathen, and perhaps defections among those, who, it was hoped, would stand firm; a want of pecuniary means, and revolutions in the commercial world. Of this class of burdens, which must vary at different times, I shall at present speak of only two.

The first is, the state of the churches at home—the alarming suspension of divine influences over the land, and the consequent evils that are every where creeping in. The Apostle well understood his subject when he compared a christian community to an organized body, in which, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Water cannot rise higher than its source. If christianity is to go out from us, we can send only such as we have. If our churches are in a backslidden, and languid, and worldly state and have little care for the conversion of men around them, they will have still less for that of the heathen. Prayer will cease; the contributions will fall away; missionaries of the right stamp cannot be had; unexpected obstacles will arise; the hands of those in the field will be weakened, the strength of the bearers of burdens will be decayed, and there will be much rubbish so that they will not be able to build the wall. We are indeed assembled to deliberate for the salvation of the heathen, but when we see the woe of Bethsaida so dreadfully incurred by our own congregations, and that gospel which we would send far away, apparently so powerless as it is preached at home; when we see our young men growing up, and those who are educated going into the world without religion; and when we look at the immediate and more

remote bearings of all this upon the cause of missions, we must feel that this state of things is pressing as a heavy burden upon us. O that this great and solemn convocation might so feel this burden, and so cast it upon the Lord, that a spirit may go forth from this place that shall revive the waste places of Zion, and cause the wilderness and solitary place to rejoice.

The second burden of this kind which I shall mention, is one which probably would not exist with much severity of pressure, were it not for the first. It is, that the friends of missions are not altogether agreed among themselves respecting the true burdens, which, as associated together in this enterprize, they ought to assume. There is doubtless an honest difference of opinion among good men, true friends of this cause, and of the Redeemer's kingdom, more particularly on the subject of slavery, how far we ought to go, and what precise course we ought to adopt. This subject I mention here, not for the purpose of discussing it, for this is not the place, but because it is a great and difficult subject, and many and perhaps all the friends of this cause have come together feeling that it must press as a peculiar burden upon this meeting of the Board. God forbid that this Board should not assume fully every burden on this subject which the God of missions would lay upon them. I hope, and believe it is their desire to do so. God forbid that they should do any thing to countenance or to sustain the curse of slavery, or that in their own onward movement they should create backwater that would retard the vessel freighted with any other benevolent enterprize. But then, on the other hand, there are evils equally obvious, and perhaps equally great, which must ensue if this Body should turn aside from its appropriate work, if elements should enter permanently into its discussions and counsels which must, in a body constituted like this, become the elements of distraction, and of disaster to the heathen world, but which might be appropriately and successfully controlled by organizations formed for the purpose, and be combined to issues that should be for the glory of God, and the good of the slave.

And while there are these dangers on the one hand and on the other, such as nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can enable us to avoid, the heart bleeds at the thought that in a day like this, christian brethren cannot agree to labor together in sending the gospel of peace and love to the heathen. That in this day when divisions are extending so widely; when the dragon of popery is pursuing the church wherever she goes into the wilderness of heathenism, and stands ready to devour every child of her missions that may be born; when the malaria that comes up from his seat is borne on every breeze across the ocean, and is beginning here and there to render thick and stifling the free air to which we were born; when the missionaries are struggling and dying in the field for want of help; when the whole heathen world

is open to us, and from its length and its breadth the Macedonian cry comes up; when it does seem as if, if we all would but unitedly put our shoulders under this ark of God—for under this dispensation he has made us all priests unto Him—and bear it forward, the Jordan of our difficulties would open before us, and we might go in and possess the promised land—that in such a day, there should be danger that that union which is strength should be dissolved; that on any ground, those who have labored, and have loved to labor together in this good cause should fall out by the way and bring reproach on the cause of Christ in the sight of the heathen, and of those who watch for our halting, is a thought that cannot fail to be as a heavy burden upon every heart that loves the cause of God. May that God who has hitherto interposed in behalf of this cause, prevent it.

But whatever the burdens now resting upon us may be, I may remark here, that probably they will not, as a whole, be less in time to come. There are some who suppose that we are on the borders of the millennium, and that obstacles are to give way of themselves—that as the church begins to move upon the old strong holds and fortresses of sin, she will find them dismantled, and the gates wide open, and those who had hitherto defended them, waiting with open arms to receive her. But that law under which the love that would reclaim men and bring them back to God was of old espoused to struggle and suffering, has not been repealed, and is not likely to be in our day. The great adversary of God and man is not asleep; and we may be sure, if some fortresses seem to be weakened or abandoned, and some batteries to be quiet, that it is because there are masked batteries preparing, and mines dug, and trains laid, it may be under our very feet. He must have read history and man to little purpose, and know little of the deep-seated opposition of this world to the cross of Christ, and his simple and spiritual religion, who sees any thing in the improvements or enlightenment, or in what is called the liberality of the 19th century, which is to prevent the fires of persecution, and the agonies and triumphs of martyrdom. He must have looked upon passing events with but a listless eye, who has not seen indications that such things are on their way. Some of these are to be found in the tendency to unchecked democracy, and the spirit of mobs; in the prevalence of infidelity; in the increase and power of popery; and in the relations of these to each other.

There is evidently a kind of worship of democracy, and even an endeavor on the part of some to identify it with Christianity, without reference to the materials of which it is composed. But while a democracy in which every man should obey God, and love his neighbor as himself, would be well; an infidel and atheistic democracy, manifesting, as it certainly would the animalism

of the brute with the art and malignity of the fiend, would give us the most vivid image of hell upon earth of which we can conceive. That there is, through the prevalence of this spirit, a gradual lowering down of authority, and loosening of restraint, and tendency to mobs, and a feeling of insecurity, cannot be denied; and than such a spirit, not all the art this side the pit, no, nor in it, could have devised a more appropriate agency to be made ready to the hands of the jesuit, by which, in the very name, and under the guise of liberty, he might heave from its base, and cause to go down in a sea of anarchy and blood that standing point, which, in the name of humanity, we had reached—that *novæ ævæ* which we fondly hoped we had found, where we could place the lever that should lift a fallen world to freedom and to God. This Rome and despotism well understand, and they are pouring in the materials of which mobs are made. Then there is the spirit of infidelity in its various forms, more extensive than many suppose. There is the coarse and brutal infidelity of ignorance and vice, that bandages its own eyes, and under the goad of passion, rushes into sin as the horse into the battle; then there is the more refined and plausible infidelity that would fain pluck leaves from the tree of science to cover its nakedness; and then there is that, perhaps not less dangerous and envenomed, which may be found coiled up under the broad robe of latitudinarian charity with which some Christian sects choose to cover themselves; and between this too, in whatever form, and popery, it will yet be found that there is a deep affinity. They have need of each other. It is upon such forms as those of popery, that in those hours of misgiving which it always has, infidelity loves to pillow its head; and then, with her penances and superstitions, the arch-sorceress well knows how to drug into stupidity the little conscience it had left, and, in the name of God, to put into its hand the dagger of persecution with which to stab the vitals of liberty and true religion. And when we remember how rapidly popery is increasing, and that it has lost none of its art, or of its blood-thirsty spirit, we cannot fail to feel how ominous it is that, on such a wonderful theatre, these three elements are beginning to come into such close and extraordinary contact. It would not be surprising, if, as they mingle, scenes should be revealed which may find a parallel only in the French revolution. And then, when we remember the materials of hate between the native and foreigner, between the capitalist and the laborer, and hear the low growl of agrarianism; when we remember sectional jealousies and the distracting relations of slavery; and see how easily the standard of a civil and a servile war might be unfurled, we cannot feel that the burden that rests upon the church in reference to the cause of Christ here, or in foreign lands, is likely to be diminished in our day. No, it will be increased. The call for prayer, and contributions, and effort, will be more

and more urgent, till, under the pressure of such a burden, we can only go and cast it upon the Lord.

And this, fathers and brethren, I now invite you to do. Your burden is great. To you the churches are looking, to you the missionaries, to you the heathen. Upon you are dependant thousands and tens of thousands for the bread of life, and from stations upon which the sun never sets, that gleam amidst the darkness of heathenism, along the continents, and the islands of the sea, they turn their eyes to you, and they beseech you, by the love and example of Christ, not to "fail or to be discouraged till judgment shall be set in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law. But great as the burden is, cast it upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you.

I cannot but think that in this simple principle of taking up just the burden that God would lay upon us, and then casting it upon Him, we find our true position—the only position of true dignity, of usefulness and peace. Thus doing, it is evident that the simpler and more spiritual is our object, the less embarrassed and the more efficient may be our action. But whatever object we may feel bound to adopt, we shall never become committed to any thing but to the cause of God. Thus shall we be saved both embarrassment and disappointment. We shall never become committed to any former course of action. Our prejudices and pride of consistency we shall sacrifice before this principle. Dear as this Board is to us, we shall not be committed to it, except as its cause is the cause of God. Dear and cherished as other objects may be, we shall not wish to press them here, except, as by so doing, we may promote the cause of God. This principle will teach us where to yield, and where to be firm; and while we are careful to take up, each one his own burden, it will lead us also, in meekness and forbearance, to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Thus doing, the embarrassments and complications that grow out of selfishness and pride, and a desire to promote personal objects will be removed, and we shall all hear the one voice of the Captain of our salvation as he leads his hosts to the conflict, saying, "FOLLOW ME."

Fathers and brethren, in thus calling upon you to cast your burden upon the Lord, I cannot forget that I am speaking to those who have long known what it is to bear burdens, and to cast them upon Him—yes, and to be sustained too. I speak to some upon whom the burden of this cause lay in its infancy. Do you remember, venerable men, how heavily it pressed upon you then, when you had small means, and no experience, and all was dark? And where did you go? Do you remember when you saw the sails expand and lessen in the distance, that bore the first missionaries from these shores? And where did you go then? Do you remember when your missionaries seemed to

from the whole heathen world? And where did you go then? Do you remember, fathers and brethren, more recent days of darkness, and how you went to God, and how he removed you out of a strait into a large place, and compassed you about with songs of deliverance? Do you remember the darkness that might be felt when the commercial pressure was on the nation, and when, as the burden was rolled upon God in prayer, his Spirit came down into the special meeting, and made the place as Goshen, where there was light? Did we ever, in all the history of this Board, cast our burden upon the Lord, and find his promise fail? No, never; and we never shall.

To thee, then, O thou God of missions, according to thy command, we unitedly come and plead thy promise. This is not our cause, but thine. Thou knowest perfectly the burden that is pressing upon us in bearing it forward. That burden we cast upon thee. **SUSTAIN THOU US.—Amen.**

SERMON CCCCVIII.

RESULTS OF FAITHFUL PREACHING.

"Rightly dividing the word of truth."—2 Tim. ii. 15.

THE passage from which the text is taken decides for the gospel minister *what* he shall preach, and *how* he shall preach; and bids him bring up all the faculties of his mind, and the affections of his heart, to the performance of the duty. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

To meet this demand, the minister must *pray* much—and *study* much—and *think* much. He is bound to conform in all things to the Bible, but that bond imposes no fetters on the intellect.

The solemn obligation which the text imposes on every minister of the gospel rightly to divide the word of truth, is seen in the important results which it produces.

1. It alarms the sinner. Impenitent sinners are so much absorbed in their attention to "the things that perish," that, if left to the influence of their own propensities and pursuits, they would never wake up; and flee from the wrath to come. Dealing with them at a distance, through labored essays upon the excellence of virtue, or the general odiousness of vice, where timid and feeble appeals, if any at all, are made to the conscience, does not meet the desperate exigencies

of their condition. Their immortal souls are soon to lose their hold upon the privileges of probation, and go away into eternity, with all the awful issues of the judgment dependant upon their moral character. With all their frailty and responsibility, they manifest an inherent repugnance to the message of salvation, and even when partially aroused by its light and conviction, tending back again to the slumbers of sin and moral death. Oh! the messenger sent by God to warn them, *must be in earnest*. The solemn and searching declarations of the Bible are the only means he can use to save them; let him determine therefore to seek the heart and conscience, if possible, to lodge the truth so deeply there, that the soul cannot rest under its pungent application. While it is the effectual working of God's spirit that brings the sinner to submission, let the preacher feel, too, that this is to be expected just in proportion to the plainness and faithfulness with which the truth is applied. That God has fitted it to this end, and given it "his power unto salvation," and made it "as the fire and the hammer which breaketh the rock." Rare indeed is that hard heart to be found, that can remain altogether unaffected when brought directly beneath its mighty influence. And if any thing is to reach and rescue the sinner, the plain truth of God, thus pointedly applied by the preacher, and blessed by the Holy Ghost, must do it. Its unyielding claims must be made to follow him up from one hiding place to another, till he yields the weapons of his rebellion, and bows in allegiance to his rightful sovereign.

2. It points the convicted sinner to a Saviour.

The full and clear exhibition of the doctrines of the Gospel is the only method of setting before the sinner his *remedy*, as well as his *danger*. Jesus Christ must be presented as the centre of the great system of gospel truth, and all the lines of direction turned towards, and meeting in, his atoning sacrifice. This is the only preaching that can ever meet the sinner's wants, or minister to the sinner's safety. The heart of the most deeply convicted man is still "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and unless the plain doctrines of the cross be kept distinctly before him, he will, most assuredly, run off into some one of the ten thousand by-paths which lead downwards from the way of life, and, dying, leave his blood on the skirts of that unfaithful watchman who neglected to warn and guide him. He must preach plain truth, and deal with souls in solemn earnestness; and while trembling under the deep conviction of their sin, they cry—"Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" he must be ready to give the explicit answer—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

3. It reaches the hiding place of the deceiver.

We may be as cautious as we will, in the reception of members to the Church of Christ, but such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, and such the impossibility for mortal eyes to read its secret character, that the self-deceiver and the hypocrite will get within the fold. There is reason to fear, that all our churches contain some, perhaps many, to whom the Judge, at the last day will say—"Depart from me, I never knew you."

But dark as is the concealment in which the character of the heart is often veiled from the eye of man, the preacher has always the opportunity of bringing the searching light of divine truth to shine in upon this darkness. It is his duty to do it often. With all the clearness of the inspired word, let the features of *true religion be delineated, as distinguished from all counterfeits*—let him tell, from the Bible, how a renewed heart *must feel*, and a renewed man *must act*; and let him put the touchstone round to every member's conscience; and self-deception is undeceived, and hypocrisy unmasked. The truth becomes "a discernier of the thoughts and intentions of the heart;" and by it, many a mask is torn off, and many a false refuge pulled down.

4. It reclaims the backslider.

Oh! how often have we occasion to heave the sigh over the returning coldness and indifference of those whose glowing zeal seemed once so quenchless! How often—to apply the apostrophe of the affectionate apostle—"ye did run well, who did hinder you?" Many begin fair, and with glowing love and zeal in the cause of Christ, "run well" for a season. But alas! a returning absorption in the business and pursuits of the world throws its chilling influence over them, and the warmth and glow of spiritual life seems well nigh extinct. A faithful and affectionate pastor weeps over their sad condition, and grieves under the discouragement of their withering example.

But, thanks to God, if they are the real children of his grace, he hath put within his word an influence to thaw and melt their frozen hearts—a power that shall rouse them from their guilty slumbers. The minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is bound to great faithfulness on this point. He must use the word of God with a plainness and distinctness of application which shall reach the object. Let him set before them their violated vows—their broken covenant—their destructive influence—the awful doubt which hangs over a once hopeful experience—and the dishonor done to him whose holy name they bear; and, under the blessing of Almighty God, he shall have the satisfaction to see them return with weeping, confession, and renewed dedication to the Saviour. The sheep that had strayed away, and long wandered upon the mountains, shall thus be found, and borne back rejoicing.

5. It makes decided, practical Christians. So far as preaching can minister to the establishment of the christian, it is in presenting the word of truth plainly, and applying it faithfully. From the cares, and toils, and perhaps trials of the week, he takes his seat in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, to be fed with the bread of eternal life. The preacher sets before him the plain doctrines and duties of the Bible—warms his heart by the clear illustration of the truth as it is in Jesus—cheers his soul by some distinct delineation of that “hope which is set before him in the Gospel”—and throws the light, and life, and joy of salvation all around him, in the bright illumination of some precious promise of his Saviour; and oh! from that consecrated place the holy man goes home refreshed, comforted, strengthened, “able to give a reason for the hope that is in him,” and testifying that—however it may have been with others—the Sabbath has been *his* delight, and the sanctuary, to him, “the gate of heaven.”

Here the meek and humble christian, from the plain, serious, faithful preaching of the gospel, gains clear apprehensions of truth and duty—becomes “mighty in the scriptures”—receives a directing, quickening, sanctifying influence; and thus, “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” he lives a *decided* christian—a *practical* christian—a *happy* christian—the faithful minister’s “*stat* in his crown of rejoicing.”

REFLECTIONS.

1. The Minister of the Gospel should feel his own, and his hearers’ dependence upon the Holy Ghost.

Let the church or the ministry renounce their dependence upon the spirit of God, and the day of revivals has gone by—the glory is departed—the gospel, with all its aptitude to move and melt the human heart, is powerless. So “fully set in them to do evil,” are the hearts of the children of men, that with all their powers of free agency—their obligations—and their opportunities—they “will not come to Christ that they might have life.”

The preacher needs this divine influence, to enlighten an otherwise darkened understanding, and warm an otherwise cold heart. Talent, and learning, and eloquence, are all in vain in his great work, without the help of God. He will prove but “a blind leader of the blind.” When Paul planted and Apollos watered, God must give the increase; and much more in the decay of primitive zeal and faithfulness is the necessity of this holy influence manifest.

The people need this influence. Without it, no matter how great may be the zeal and earnestness of the preacher; how glowing his descriptions; or how warm and tender his entreaties and exhortations, they will *certainly*, but as *freely* as certainly, resist the truth,

and go down to death their own destroyers. Let, then, neither preacher or hearer ever separate the word of divine truth from the Holy Ghost, who inspired and applies it.

2. The preacher should feel, that the truth he delivers is as applicable to himself as to his hearers.

God has not sent angels to bear the tidings of peace and pardon to a ruined world. He has put this commission into the hands of those who lie under the same condemnation as the men to whom they bear it. They are bound by the same authority—amenable to the same tribunal—and dependant upon the same grace. Dying men, preach to dying men. How unseemly! how revolting is it! if the preacher appear to stand apart from his hearers; and, elevating himself above them, speak the promises, or proclaim the threatenings of the Bible, as if from a sphere without, and beyond, their personal application.

When, then, the preacher goes forth to this great work, and bears the message of his Master to dying men, let him always feel that his own eternal interests are involved in the reception of the same offers he bears to them; and that his own salvation depends upon a hearty compliance with the self-same terms of mercy. This will spread its influence over all his ministry. It will infuse a softening influence through all his appeals and warnings. Every subject will then be invested with the importance and earnestness of a kindred interest, and a personal application. The realities of the sinner's guilt and danger will then be disclosed with all the melting tenderness of his own deep experience; and the high hopes, and holy joys, of God's redeemed will flow out from a heart that feels, and a soul that glows with the same heavenly aspirations. The deep sincerity of his own emotion sends a softening influence around—arrests attention—and helps to fasten conviction on the conscience. It is the way to "save his own soul and those who hear him."

3. The weighty responsibilities resting upon both the preacher and the hearers of the Gospel.

A burden, such as no other creature bears, is laid upon the gospel minister. Undying souls are committed to his charge, and he is required "to watch for them as one that must give account." He will be "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death" to them all. His influence, either for good or for evil, will be widespread, and powerful. Deathless spirits will go off into eternity, bearing the stamp which his hand has put upon them; and their impression will last, unfaded, away beyond the issues of the final judgment. The personal regard and affection of his people, desirable as it is, is of infinitely less consequence than the approbation of his own conscience and of his Saviour. The prosperity

of an important branch of Zion is committed to every settled pastor. The stability of its christian character—the efficiency of its christian efforts—and the power of its christian influence—so far as human instrumentality can go—are laid in his hand, and at his responsibility. To his faithfulness is committed the important work of guiding, and strengthening, the new converts to Christ, and the warning, and convicting, and converting of those still "without hope and God in the world." Faithfulness, in all the departments of his sacred office, is the only course of success or safety; and, especially, faithfulness in delivering the message which he bears from God to men. "Woe be to him," not only if he do not "preach"—but woe is his if he do not preach "the gospel."

But this responsibility comes not alone upon the minister. The execution of his official duties imposes corresponding obligations upon his people. They can no more shake off *their* responsibility than he can *his*. If he must *preach*, they must *hear, believe and obey*; and if the day is coming when he must give up his account to God, "how he has preached," so the same day will lay the necessity upon *them* to give an account "how they have heard." And let it be remembered, that the *same truth* he is bound to deliver, they are bound to receive. Neither he, nor they, can exercise their own choice in this respect. God has long since settled this whole question, by saying to his ministers—"Go ye into all the world, and preach *the Gospel* to every creature"—and by saying of every hearer—"He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." That same Gospel, which he must preach, they must believe, or perish. Those feelings which rise up against the preacher, for the plainness of his dealing with your consciences, rest assured, my hearers, strike a higher object, and are directed against a holier Being, than the mortal man whose faithfulness has excited them. God has put his own "mind and will" into his revelation, and it is *his* authority that will sustain and defend it.